

I want to draw your attention to a meeting that is going to be held at the Pierce School IN Bennington on Thursday December 10th at 7 PM. The Arthur Knight, the Bennington School Board rep, and I along with members of the SAU administrative team will be gathering to provide you with some preliminary information on our Budget for 2011-2011. We are going to use this meeting to provide you an opportunity to give us feedback and provide us with some of your ideas and comments on how to fund our budget. This listening meeting will be designed for YOU to be HEARD. We are still early in the budgeting process and this affords you a real chance to make a difference. So bring a friend and come to our meeting.

I also want to update you on a recent meeting that was held to receive input from the public on the articles of agreement. Article 5 which establishes that there must be an elementary school in each town excluding Sharon was the topic of discussion that night. There had been no formal recommendation for any change to the article and the meeting provided a forum for discussion and input. We had over 25 people in attendance and there was good representation from some Frankestown residents. In the end, the committee recommended to make no changes to the articles of agreement. What that means to all of you is that the Board will NOT be recommending to the voters any changes to the articles, but any citizen has the right to submit a warrant article to be brought before the voters. If this happens then you all would have a chance to vote for or against that proposal. As your Board representative, I am not in favor of making any changes to how we currently manage our schools. While there has been a decline in enrollment at FES and GBS, I feel that the Board has the proper oversight and can make recommendation and act on recommendations by the Administration as to what is the best way to maximize the educational opportunities for our children. I am not in favor of closing schools, which has NOT been discussed by the Board. We should however, always make sure that we are using our resources in the most appropriate way.

The Superintendent has provided the Board with two different budget development models for us to consider. The first is called a level services model, which can be thought of as a no-growth model. What that means is that new programs that have been piloted would not be adopted for the next school year. All programs would stay the same and nothing new could be implemented. The currently piloted math programs in the elementary schools would not be able to be implemented. We would still need to meet all contractual obligations, and other fixed would be budgeted for, i.e. fuel transportation etc. It is important to note that this still would lead to bottom line increases in the 2010-2011 budget as compared to the 2009-2010 budget. Figures are still being calculated and will not be available until the board holds its budget working session on Saturday December 12th

The other model known as the growth or path improvement model would allow for the movement of pilot programs to adopted programs. This would include math in the middle school, full adoption of the district wide technology program, and adoption of a new K-4 language arts program. There is also an early language arts reading program being piloted in the elementary schools. We would also be able to continue to fund the

literacy coaches who have been responsible for making great strides assisting staff across the district with development and implementation of new and more effective reading instructional strategies. These are just some of the programs we need to continue to support

At the last Educational committee meeting our committee overwhelming supported the path improvement model. It is our belief which I fully support, that we must continue to support and thus fund programs that directly impact our students and staff which are included in the District strategic plan for 2010-2015. The plan has a well articulated, year by year approach to curriculum assessment, re-design, pilot, re-assess, and implantation plan. We recommended to the full Board that we support this important plan which serves as the blueprint for how we need to budget and support the needs of the District and thus allow our Administration to execute their strategic plan

I wanted to provide you with some insight into not only what we are thinking about, but how our programs are being piloted and tested and what it would mean to our children if we do not provide sufficient funding to implement, measure and assess our pilots. I also would encourage you to ask for a copy of our Strategic plan so you can see how things are broken down and what the future of your children's education can and should look like in the future. Stay tuned for a more thorough and details article on the budget as well as any bond proposals that we will bring to our voters. One last request, as you read this article, read articles in the Ledger-Transcript, or talk about the budget with each other, remember that we need to look at the value that a program has on the education of the children as well as the impact on your taxes. The impact of your vote could well mean making trade-off decisions that can have a direct impact our stated goal to make ConVal a high performing district. I only ask that you find the time to ask me the tough questions so when you make a chose to vote for the budget, you do so with a more complete picture of how we are education the children and not just focus on the dollars spent or increases proposed. I look forward to hearing from many of you soon

Feel free to send me E-mail, at sbrock@conval.edu, or call me at 547-6221 or send you comments directly to my home at 700 Bible Hill Rd.